



(U) Write Right: Too Much Redundancy is Redundant (repost)

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of the Reporting Board (S12A)
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(U) This article first appeared on January 28, 2005:

(U) We start off the New Year with an excerpt from comedian and wordsmith George Carlin's latest book, which we consider an appropriate follow-up to our [recent admonition against redundancy](#). Mr. Carlin calls this exercise...

"Count the superfluous redundant pleonastic tautologies"

(U) "My fellow countrymen, I speak to you as co-equals, knowing you are deserving of the honest truth. Let me warn you in advance, my subject matter concerns a serious crisis caused by an event in my past history, the execution-style killing of a security guard on a delivery truck. At that particular point in time, I found myself in a deep depression making mental errors which seemed as though they might threaten my future plans. I'm not over-exaggerating; I needed a new beginning, so I decided to pay a social visit to a personal friend with whom I share the same mutual objective and who is one of the most unique individuals I have ever personally met. The end result was an unexpected surprise. When I reiterated again to her the fact that I needed a fresh start, she said I was exactly right, and as an added plus she came up with a final solution that was absolutely perfect. Based on her past experience, she felt we needed to join together in a common bond for a combined total of 24 hours a day in order to find some new initiative. What a novel innovation! And as an extra bonus, she presented me with a free gift of a tuna fish. Right away I noticed an immediate positive improvement and although my recovery is not totally complete, the sum total is that I feel much better now, knowing that I am not uniquely alone."

(U) Be careful; not every adjective or adverb in the above paragraph is superfluous and many are arguable, so we are not going to publish a "correct" number; this is merely an exercise intended to help writers examine their word use. This brings us back to last month's column as well; we admit we could probably have worded our punch line about "successfully" better, as several indignant computer scientists have informed us. The use of "successfully failed" is indeed a legitimate computer term -- but it is non-redundant only in that limited context. This is what "jargon" means, and why one should avoid it out of that context.

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